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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002678

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y SUBJECT LINE - 1ST/2ND PARAGRAPH

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2019
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: 36 MEK DETAINEES TRANSFERRED TO MUTHANNA AIRFIELD

Classified By: Acting DCM Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The GOI tells us that the 36 Mujahideen al-Khalq (MEK) detainees arrested at Camp Ashraf on July 28 have been moved to a detention facility at Muthanna Airfield in Baghdad pursuant to a deportation order issued on October 1 declaring them illegally present in the country. An earlier court had recently issued an order dropping criminal charges and requiring release of all thirty-six individuals, and the GOI is currently appealing that decision before the Court of Cassation. END SUMMARY.

GOI Sends MEK 36 to Muthanna

12. (C) On October 4, Pol M/C met with Ali al-Yassery, the head of the GOI's Ashraf Committee (and a close relative of the PM), who stated that the 36 MEK detainees arrested on July 28 had been transferred from Freedom Base inside the International Zone of Baghdad to a MOD detention facility at Muthanna Airfield in Baghdad on that same day. Yassery said that the Residency Directorate in Baghdad issued an order October 1 declaring that the 36 detainees had no right to stay in Iraq and should be deported as soon as a third country could be found to accept them. Yassery also said that detention orders for the 36 detainees had been issued and are renewable every 15 days. Yassery confirmed that the Muthanna facility is a military prison with a hospital.

13. (C) Prior to their transfer to Muthana, UNAMI and Ministry of Human Rights representatives visited the 36 detainees in Baghdad. UNAMI Human Rights Officer Scott Gracie told Poloff that the detainees had access to food, beds, blankets, and medical attention and were allowed to move around the facility. One detainee had a broken arm, suffered when he attempted to resist the GOI's decision to transfer the detainees from Khalis prison to Baghdad. Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Selim told Poloff on October 4 that the detainees appeared weak as a result of their prolonged hunger strike and expressed concern about the public diplomacy ramifications if any were to die while in GOI custody. Selim also stated that the detention facility in Muthanna was of a higher standard than most detention facilities in Iraq and that the detainees are being held separately from the general prison population and being monitored closely.

Proposed Press Guidance

14. (SBU) With respect to the status of the 36 MEK detainees, post recommends the following talking points on an if asked basis only:

--GOI officials have confirmed that there is a valid legal detention order in effect for these 36 individuals. We have no reason to believe that the GOI is acting outside of its

assurances to treat these individuals humanely and in accordance with Iraq's Constitution, laws, and international obligations.

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